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## Kentucky Horse Park

# African-American Horsemen of Bourbon County Included in American Saddlebred Museum Exhibit

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LEXINGTON, KY (Re-released February 17, 2005) – Bourbon County, Kentucky has long been associated with fine bourbon and even finer American Saddlebreds. From Civil War times through the late 1950s Bourbon County was at the forefront of Kentucky Saddlebred activity. The American Saddlebred Museum at the Kentucky Horse Park is showcasing noted horses and horsemen of Bourbon County in the 2005 special exhibit The House of Bourbon: Bourbon County's Saddlebred Kingdom, which will run through December 30, 2005.

Many of the foremost sires in the Saddlebred registry were bred, foaled, raised or trained in Bourbon County. World's champions and sires of world's champions such as Bourbon King, King's Genius, Edna May's King and Leatherwood King all hailed from Paris and North Middletown. Noted horsemen Allie G. Jones, Robert S. McCray, Max Biederman and Henry Caywood are just a few who called Bourbon County home.

Not only was Bourbon County the birthplace of many great Saddlebreds, it was also home to a group of rarely recognized horsemen, the black horsemen of Bourbon County. From the days following the Civil War through the 1950s men such as George "Dan" Brown, Tom Downing, William "Pigtail" and Eddie Stivers, William Beauford Hall, Tom and "Bud" Butler, Will "Uncle Bill" Strauter and more served as behind-the-scenes trainers for many of the best farms in the area. Black horseman Gene Gay worked with the famed Allie G. Jones and put a young Joe Jones up on his first horse while William Howard "Bulgia" Brown gaited the reserve world's grand champion Admiration of the Nation for Stoddard Young. Most of these men were known as grooms or caretakers rather than trainers or assistants but they contributed greatly to the success of the farms they were associated with. It was a very different era and few black horsemen were ever afforded the chance to ride in the show ring. They were limited to competing against one another in groom's classes where they showed their employers' horses in halter. Though rarely in the spotlight themselves, the black horsemen helped shine a light on the horses of Bourbon County. The museum is pleased to present a case of rarely seen photos of the black horsemen of Bourbon County.

The exhibit includes artwork, photographs, trophies, ribbons, tack and memorabilia from Bourbon County. Several George Ford Morris pieces highlight the exhibit. Included are watercolors of both Marvel King and Bourbon King and charcoals of King Barrymore and King's Genius. A 1905 Kentucky State Fair Horse Show trophy won by Bourbon King is on display along with an unusual three

dimensional trophy won by King's Genius at the New York National.

For more information, contact Tolley Graves in the American Saddlebred Museum at the Kentucky Horse Park, 859/259-2746 or [ashm@mis.net](mailto:ashm@mis.net).

The park will be open from 9 am until 5 pm Wednesday - Sunday through March 14; admission is \$9 for adults, \$6 for children 7-12. From March 15-October 31, the park is open seven days a week. Admission is \$14 for adults and \$7 for children ages 7-12. Children six and under are always admitted free of charge. Admission includes the American Saddlebred Museum.

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The Kentucky Horse Park is a working horse farm/theme park and equine competition facility dedicated to man's relationship with the horse. The park is an agency of the Kentucky Commerce Cabinet that hosted 913,000 visitors and 80 special events and horse shows in 2003. The park is located at Exit 120, Interstate 75, just north of Lexington. **The** place to get close to horses, the park is open daily March 15 to October 31, and Wednesday through Sunday, November 1 to March 14.

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